DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 082 639 HE 004 665

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TITLE	Freshman Sexual Attitudes and Behavior.
INSTITUTION	Maryland Univ., College Park. Counseling Center.
REPORT NO	RR-7-73
PUB DATE	73
NOTE	10p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Freshmen; *Higher Education; *Sexuality; Social Behavior; *Student Attitudes; Student Behavior; *Student Characteristics; *Student Personnel Work; Students; Surveys

ABSTRACT

At the University of Maryland, 758 randomly selected incoming freshman students were administered an anonymous poll regarding their sexual attitudes and behavior. Results showed that the Maryland freshman generally resembled other U.S. college students in their sexual experience. Approximately half (52% of males, 46% of females) reported that they had had intercourse. Most students believed in sexual intercourse before marriage (77% of males and 69% of females) but most (44%) felt it appropriate only with someone with whom they were deeply involved emotionally. Students who had had intercourse tended to be older, more likely to know someone who had had an abortion, more likely to know homosexuals and less likely to feel that homesexuals need psychological or medical help than are sexually inexperienced students. Results of the factor analysis showed that sexual attitudes and behavior appear to be relatively independent dimensions that should be studied and discussed separately. Overall this study shows less of a gap between attitudes and behavior than in past studies. This is an important point for those working with students since many student programs on many topics tended to be "remedial" in nature. That is, they attempt to bring perceptions and reality in line. If there is not a disparity, the roles of student personnel workers must change. Suggested roles are discussed. (Author)

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SUMMARY

Much talk has been heard about a sexual revolution or renaissance and many have speculated about changes in attitude and behaviors. 758 randomly selected incoming freshman students were administered an anonymous poll regarding their sexual attitudes and behavior. Responses were analyzed using percentages, analysis of variance (.05 level) and factor analysis.

Results showed that Maryland freshmen generally resembled other U.S. college students in their sexual experience. Approximately half (52% of males, 46% of females) reported that they had had intercourse. Most students believed in sexual intercourse before marriage (77% of males and 69% of females) but most (44% of total) felt it appropriate only with someone with whom they were deeply involved emotionally. Students who had had intercourse tended to be older, more likely to know someone who had had an abortion, more likely to know homosexuals and less likely to feel that homosexuals need psychological or medical help than were sexually inexperienced students. Results of the factor analysis showed that sexual attitudes and behavior appear to be relatively independent dimensions which should be studied and discussed separately.

Overall this study shows less of a gap between attitudes and behavior than in past studies. This is an important point for those working with students since many student programs on many topics tended to be "remedial" in nature. That is, they attempt to bring perceptions and reality in line. If there is not a disparity, the roles of student personnel workers must change. Suggested roles are discussed.

Human sexuality and sexual responsiveness have been topics of concern and interest to many people since perhaps the beginning of time. Kinsey (1948) is credited with providing the first really authoritative data in the United States, which was the beginning of much further interest and study. Kinsey's data concluded that by the age of 21 approximately 3/4 of the male population and 1/3 to 1/2 of the female population have experienced sexual intercourse. A more recent survey of 21 colleges in the U.S. (Luckey and Nass, 1969) found that 58% of males and 43% of females tested had had the experience of sexual intercourse. Of the experienced females, 47% had coitus with only one partner. Similarly, Kaats and Davis (1970) reported rates of 60% and 41-44% for groups which were predominantly sophomores and juniors.

Much talk has been heard about a sexual revolution or renaissance. Many have speculated about changes in attitudes and behaviors. Gallup polls conducted in 1969 showed a definite trend for younger people to consider sex before marriage an acceptable action. In order to support or refute the repeated statements that sexual mores are becoming more permissive and the "double standard" is declining, research is needed.

The purpose of the present study was to assess student attitudes toward sexual mores and obtain a reported measure of their behavior.

Method

Subjects were 758 randomly selected freshman students who took an anonymous questionnaire during a summer orientation program at the University of Maryland.

Their responses were summarized and compared to other college student replies found in studies such as those by Luckey and Nass (1969), and Kaats and Davis (1970) to determine similarities to other students in behavior and attitude.

Questionnaires were then analyzed, using a two way analysis of variance (fixed effects -.05 level) with two variables: [Whether or not the student ever

had had sexual intercourse (yes or no) and sexual identity (male or female)] to determine any differences between the groups.

The questionnaire was also factor analyzed, using the principal components method with squared multiple correlations as communality estimates, and factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 rotated to a varimax solution. The factor analysis allowed for the determination of patterns of response among the items.

Results and Discussion

Analyses indicated that University of Maryland freshmen resembled other U.S. college students in their sexual experience. Approximately half (52% of males, 46% of females) reported that they had had intercourse. Other figures included 58% for males and 43% for females (Luckey and Nass, 1969), and 60% for males and 41% for females (Kaats and Davis, 1970), which were determined using older students than the present sample. A large proportion of the half who have had intercourse have had it with one person only (46% of the males and 54% of the females who had had intercourse). In the Luckey and Nass (1969) survey, 47% of the females who had had intercourse had had it with only one partner.

Most students believed in sexual intercourse before marriage (73%: 77% of males and 69% of females), with the largest number of students (44% of total) feeling it appropriate only with someone with whom they were deeply involved emotionally. Male students appeared to be more casual in their attitudes than females, with 45% feeling that fondness and/or mutual attraction was sufficient while only 11% of the females agreed. Only 13% felt that students who do not have sexual intercourse before marriage are considered strange.

Less evidence of a double standard was shown in this study than in the one by Kaats and Davis (1970) when students were queried on their concepts of the ideal

sexual code for male and female college students, but female students were more concerned that sexual intercourse be accompanied by deep emotional involvement for both sexes than were males. Female students did indicate that more male students engaged in intercourse through fondness and/or mutual attraction (78%) than did females (37%).

Relatively few students (32%: 42% of males and 22% of females) believed that the availability of contraceptives increases promiscuity. Most students (83%) felt that masturbation is a normal sexual outlet.

Regarding abortions, most students (82%) believed that they should be readily available to students without parental consent, but only 5% of the females had had an abortion during the last 12 months and 2% of the males had been sexually involved with someone who had had an abortion during that time. In contrast, 57% of the females and 48% of the males knew someone who had had an abortion during the past year.

Of the students surveyed, 34% believed that there are a lot of homosexuals at the University of Maryland, and 25% personally knew one or more homosexuals. Only 5% had had a homosexual experience during the past year, and 53% thought that homosexuals needed psychological or medical help. Males seemed more wary of homosexuality than females, with 62% saying they would be careful not to let anyone know if they were homosexual, compared to 43% of the females.

The analyses of variance performed using two variables - whether or not the student had had intercourse and sex (MF) - yielded a number of significantly different attitudes between groups. Students who had had intercourse had a more liberal personal sexual code than those who had not. They also held more liberal ideal sexual codes for both males and females and expected that male college students probably displayed more liberal behavior. Students who had had intercourse tended to be slightly older (one or two months) than those who had not,

and they tended to have more liberal sexual attitudes in general. Experienced students held a stronger belief that having contraceptives available does not increase promiscuity and that abortions should be readily available without parental consent. They were also more likely to know someone who had had an abortion during the previous 12 months. Students with no sexual intercourse experience were less likely to know any homosexuals, more likely to think that homosexuals need psychological or medical help, and more likely to keep personal homosexuality a secret.

Several male-female differences were also noted. Males held a more liberal personal sexual code and ideal sexual code for both males and females. Females were more likely to expect that male behavior was liberal. Males were older, less likely to know any homosexuals, more likely to think that homosexuals need psychological or medical help, less likely to think that there are a lot of homosexuals on campus, and more likely to keep personal homosexuality a secret. Females held a stronger belief that having contraceptives available does not increase promiscuity, and abortions should be readily available to students without parental consent. Females were more likely to know someone who had had an abortion during the previous 12 months and were less likely to say that students who do not have sexual intercourse before marriage are considered strange.

The factor analysis yielded two factors accounting for 85% of the common variance, on which items clustered (Table 1). The first loaded most highly with items which questioned the respondent's sexual identity (male or female) and behavior. The second factor's highest five loadings included all the items which concerned sexual codes, be they personal, ideal or expectations. Thus sexual attitudes and behaviors appear to be independent dimensions which should be studied and discussed separately.

The sexual behavior of the freshmen in this study resembles that of the upperclass students in other studies. However, the sexual attitudes appear more liberal than in past studies. Thus there does not appear to be as great a gap between ideals and actual practice. This seems a particularly important point for counselors and student personnel workers. Traditionally, orientation programs, counseling, student activites and other student personnel functions have emphasized working on the gap between perception and reality for students. The data from this and other studies (Horowitz and Sedlacek, 1973) suggest that this traditional "remedial" function is no longer a viable one for student personnel workers.

Several new and emerging roles for student personnel workers seem possible and desirable. Rather than focusing on the supposed miscperceptions of students, the emphasis can be on exploring all the school has to offer. All schools provide for some diversity of lifestyle, and helping students to be aware of the diversity seems important and useful. Second, it would seem that student personnel workers should spend more time in direct or indirect support of academic programs, the primary business of a college or university. Teaching, academic advising, structuring learning environments and programs, and focusing on classroom activities seem warranted. Third, a role discussed but not often implemented (O'Neil, 1972), is that of a change agent. O'Neil found very few student personnel workers engaged in such activity. That is, if the expectations and reality of the environment are in line, one might try to change the environment and hope to bring the perceptions along with the change. This will likely require much stronger and, likely, more radical positions backed by expertise, taken by student personnel workers. Change is difficult and requires intense and sustained efforts (Alinsky, 1971), but it is possible through student personnel functions. Sedlacek and Brooks (1973) demonstrated change through the effective use of data and discuss a number of principles for generating change by student personnel workers.

Table 1.

Largest Five Factor Loadings or Two Factors

Factor I.	Factor Loading
1. My sex is: 1. Male 2. Female	-.95
18, (For Females) I have had an abortion during the last 12 months.	-.94
19. (For Males) I was sexually involved with someone who had an abortion in the past 12 months.	.94
13. Having contraceptives available increases promiscuity.	-.26
21. I know someone who had an abortion during the last year.	.25
Factor II.	
4. Which ONE of the following statements most accurately describes your personal sexual code? 1. I do not believe in sexual intimacy - intercourse or anything close to it - before marriage 2. I believe in some sexual intimacy but not intercourse before marriage. 3. I believe in sexual intercourse before marriage only with someone I am deeply involved with emotionally. 4. I believe in sexual intercourse with people I am fond of and to whom I am sexually attracted. 5. I believe in sexual intercourse whenever there is a mutual sex attraction.	-.70
5. Using the statements in question 4, indicate which statement most accurately describes your concept of the ideal code for male and female college students.	-.76(Female) -.80(Male)
6. Which statement in question 4 probably most accurately desribes the behavior of most college students?	-.44(Female) -.52(Male)

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